THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) to (c) The key amendment in the Mines and minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957 such as transparency in grant of mineral concession, seamlessness and security of tenure, appropriate elaboration of selection criteria in the case of multiple applicants, encouragement to value addition which go hand-in-hand with the growth of mineral sector etc. arising out of policy directions in the New Mineral Policy have been taken up for consultation with the State Governments of mineral rich states before final amendment of the Act. Similar exercise for amending Rules framed under the Act has been initiated.

Downsizing in Geological Survey of India

239. SHRI NANDI YELLAIAH: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 2961 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 30th April, 2007 and state:

(a) whether Geological Survey of India (GSI) is downsizing its present strength of 13155 in all the streams to 7600, by closing transport, workshop, Drilling and Drawing streams after 2010, onwards; and

(b) whether Government is contemplating to privatise the GSI?

. THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) The Expert Committee, headed by Shri Arvind Verma, Ex-Secretary, Ministry of Mines, in its report given in December, 2002, recommended reduction in Group C and D staff strength in various streams of GSI from 13155 to 7600 and the strength was fixed accordingly. *Vide* the Ministry of Mines' order dated 03.07.2007, the staff in excess of the revised strength in Transport, Workshop, Drilling and Drawing streams have been allowed to be retained in GSI till their natural depletion. There is no proposal to close Drawing, Drilling and Transport Streams after 2010. Government has set up a High Powered Committee which is looking into the mandate of GSI, and these issues will be considered by the Committee.

(b) No, Sir.

Iron ore reserves

240. SHRI R.C. SINGH: Will the Minister of MINES be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total estimated quantity of iron ore reserves in the country and mineable iron ore mines; and

(b) how many iron ore mines are in the public sector and private sector with estimated quantity of reserves in each case?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF MINES (SHRI B.K. HANDIQUE): (a) and (b) As per available information the total iron ore reserves in the country is 7.06 billion tonnes and the total resources of iron ore are estimated at 25.25 billion tonnes as on 01.04.2005. The total number of mineable iron ore mines in the country in the year 2007-08 are 300, of which 265 mines are in private sector and 35 mines are in public sector. The estimated quantity of reserve in Public Sector and Private Sector mines is 4.59 billion tonnes and 2.43 billion tonnes respectively.